SOME NOTICES OF ANCIENT LONDON.

Among the remains of ancient London I am about to notice, will be seen fragments which may come under the following classification, viz., fortified buildings, religious establishments, palatial edifices, charitable asylums, gates, monuments, and domestic residences; yet in most instances the existing fragments of buildings thus classed, will appear so inconsiderable, that I fear I shall, in producing them, remind you of that worthy who carried with him a brick, in order to set forth the appearance of Carthage.

Beginning with the first of the above classification, viz., fortified buildings, I may instance that which is called, par eminence, the Tower, as the chief stronghold appertaining to the ancient city. Yet, according to present appearance, some remaining portions of the wall which formerly surrounded London, should claim precedence in point of antiquity, but other evidence tends, in my opinion, to do more than merely suggest an earlier building, one probably contemporary with the original wall, which has occupied some portion of the site lying within the Tower inclosure. However, as an examination of these evidences would occupy much time, I will pass them over for the present, in order to mention one of the towers, which surround the great keep or White Tower. This is called the Salt Tower, and has been considered the most ancient of the surrounding edifices. It has likewise been named Cæsar's Tower,* but as Julius Cæsar would, by sufficient negative evidence, appear never to have obtained a footing in London, chroniclers of latter days have treated this association with entire contempt. Yet as Rome did certainly produce eleven other Cæsars, and the title of Cæsar was afterwards given to the eldest son of the emperor, I cannot conceive that it requires any inordinate degree of credulity to suppose, that one of them may indeed have stood in the relation of sponsor to such a tower in London founded by Roman hands. That a building so founded stood either upon or near this spot, is evinced, to my thinking, by many signs.

About the distance of a stone's cast from the building I am describing, some remains of London wall formerly connected with the Tower postern still exist. The lower portion of this wall is evidently of Roman workmanship, the masonry being regular, the stones well squared; and over each course of stone there is a course of flat bricks, two deep. Each brick is 1¼ inch in thickness, varying from 17½ inches to 16½ inches in length, and from 10 to 12 inches in breadth. The depth of this course of brickwork, including the mortar, is 4½ in. The courses of stone are five stones in each course, and measure 46 inches in depth between each course of brickwork. The space, composed of regular masonry, such as I have described, is about 8 feet above the ground. Over this space is another portion, composed, apparently, of the debris of the original wall; and the remainder of the superstructure (the entire wall being about 28 feet high), comprises a series of coarse rubble, composed of huge blocks of undressed stone, mixed with flints and bits of Roman brick, and finally, a succession of masonry in small squared stones and rubble. We thus perceive an example of the various methods by which this ancient rampart was re-edified at different times, probably none of them later than the period when, in the reign of the fourth Edward, brick was made from the clay of Moorfields for the purpose of replenishing the battered and time-eaten fortification of the cherished city. And finding these evidences based upon a visible Roman foundation, one which brings us so nearly to the Tower itself, even to the postern thereof, I perceive in this fact one motive, among several others, for believing that such was probably the approach to a contemporary stronghold, or citadel, probably the palatinate seat of the Roman governor. I may not here go into other evidences, such as the discovery of the remains of Roman masonry within the Tower walls, of ingots marked with the Roman stamp, and so forth; but I will merely assert, that if such were heedfully collated, they would be found both numerous and salient. It must, however, be here admitted, in moderation of this view, that the Saxon chronicle does certainly fail to make mention of any such edifice as I have alluded to; but surely the river Thames appears to have arisen in unruly floods of yore, and the walls of which I have spoken may have become a tribute to its waters even long ere the Saxon chronicle was framed. But as this is no proper occasion for prolonging an argument of which some might say, that the gist thereof is no other than a setting forth of the history of a place, from the time of its nonentity even to the period when it began to exist, I will now drop such speculations, and will beg of you to return with me in order to note some of the more tangible matters appertaining to the Salt Tower.

* So called in a survey, tem. Henry VIII.

When I sketched it, the 9th of November, 1846, the houses, which constituted a yeoman warder lodging and a canteen, called the Golden-chain, were demolished, and the ancient ballium wall was laid bare. Previous to the destruction of this portion of the wall, I made an examination of it, and found it to be composed of chalk blocks intermixed with flint, and faced with Kentish ragstone. The height of this wall was about 40 feet, and the breadth about 9 feet. Passages in the thickness of the wall are said to have formed a communication between the different mural towers; but I had not an opportunity of observing if any such appearances were visible in this instance. When I suggested the possibility of the ground, occupied by the Salt Tower, having been the site of a Roman building, I had no intention of conveying the notion that any visible portion of the present edifice was referable to such a period. Such evidences could only be hoped for in an investigation of the foundation, and of the lower dungeons, which are now inaccessible. The body of the building is ascribed to the time of William Rufus. The flat abutment appears to be two centuries later; it has originally had a pointed roof, the traces of which may be distinguished from the more recent superstructure; and from the character of the window, it has probably contained a small chapel or oratory.

I will not prolong this notice by any description of the interior of the Salt Tower, but will only mention that it contains some remarkable inscriptions, one of which is a memorial of Hugh Draper, committed in 1560, on suspicion of sorcery and practice against Sir William St. Lowe and his lady. Draper was the keeper of a tavern at Bristol, as well as a professor of judicial astrology. A device representing a sphere with the signs of the Zodiac, denoted by their proper astrological characters, is sculptured on the wall, over which are these lines—

"Hew : Draper : of : Bristow : made : thys :
Spheer : the : 30 : daye : of : Maye : anno 1561.

I will only mention the gate of the so-called Bloody Tower, in order that I may pass through it on my way to the church of St. Peter. One cannot very well approach the church I have mentioned without passing the keep or White Tower, and few could pass it without a wish to examine those portions of its interior which are hidden from vulgar eyes. But he who would do so must be patient and persevering, for the obstacles are great and, worse than great, they are numerous, seeing that the adventurer will be referred from one party to another, each as he descends in the scale of real consequence rising in that by which he may be disposed to estimate himself. Howbeit the dragons and griffins who guard these enchanted portals being passed, it will then be found that every device that could in any wise tend to disturb or utterly scare away the genius loci has prevailed in that place.

The chapel of St. John, one of the choicest examples of Norman architecture this country can boast, is filled with presses, the building having been pressed into the service of the Record-office. And for the safe keeping and guardianship of both chapel and records, a formidable mine of gunpowder is stored in the chamber beneath, ready to disperse the whole into air, should any bold invader presume to desecrate the one, or appropriate and carry away the others.

The chapel of St. Peter ad vincula, which is situated at the north-west angle of the inner ward, appears from existing documents to have occupied that spot in the time of Henry III. It is said to have been rebuilt by Edward I., but retains little or nothing indicative of a period earlier than the architecture of the reign of Henry VIII. I will here only allude to the altar tomb of Sir Richard Cholmondely and the lady Elizabeth, his wife, as a fine work of monumental art, and passing over the numerous illustrious personages who have traversed the brief space between the scaffold and the vaults of this chapel, I will here recal the names of two of those chivalrous men who for "dear honour's sake" staked life and fortune upon the hazard of a forlorn and misguided cause. The rubbings which I set before you are from the coffins of the Lords Balmerino and Kilmarnock, who suffered in the year 1746. These two noblemen evinced a marked difference in the quality of firmness, when it came to the final scene of their disastrous adventure. Of this, and of its effect upon the executioner, I will relate a brief anecdote in the words of Northcote, the painter. "Kilmarnock," said he, "was a nervous man: he trembled, was pale, and betrayed every demonstration of fear at the sight of the terrible apparatus of death. He knelt, laid his head on the block, and it was stricken from his body at a blow. Balmarino now ascended the scaffold; his look was intrepid, his step was firm, and slapping the executioner on the shoulder, with a loud voice and unfaultering tongue, exclaimed, 'You are a brave fellow, and have done your work dexterously. Here is a purse for you, it contains not much—five guineas only, but I am a poor gentleman, it is all I can afford to give. Now, despatch me with equal skill.' Lo! the man was not used to encounter such a great creature; he appeared to be a superior being; the executioner could not stand in his presence, it was too awful for him; the wretch was at once unmanned, he was in a tremor from head to foot, and incapable of doing his duty; he mangled the neck of the brave lord, and as he gave the last feeble stroke, was himself about to give up the ghost." "Hitherto, mark ye," continued Northcote, "he had been the great man, important by virtue of his office; but behold, one so infinitely greater than he had been wont to see, reduced him to his own insignificance; and he who had sent so many out of the world with all the dignity of his calling, was now ready to fall on his knees with awe, and beg forgiveness of the victim he was legally employed to despatch."

I will now lead you through a subterranean passage, which is said to conduct from the Tower to the ancient chapel of St. Michael at Aldgate. This fine relic of antiquity is situated under the house at the south-east corner of Leadenhall-street, hard by Aldgate pump. It is said to be the work of Prior Norman, in the year 1108; this, however, strikes me as rather too early in the 12th century for the style of the building, which, however, displays some marks of the semi-Norman, or transition style. The mouldings of the ribs appear to correspond with some other examples of that style; and the clustered column, which forms the central support, appears of the Norman character, but it is nearly buried by the accumulated soil of centuries. The materials of this building are the Flanders tile, mixed with squared chalk and Caen stone, of which latter the ribs are constructed; the bosses remain perfect, and contain roses and grotesque heads. There are at the north and south extremities of this chapel an appearance of passages, such as I have already alluded to; one of these is said to run to Duke's-place, and the other to the Tower. I attempted to enter the former, but found it choked with rubbish. I will not take upon me to vouch for the precise direction or extent of these passages; but as the work of clearing them, as well as the body of the building, from the loose soil which lies there to the depth of several feet, would be a thing of no great trouble or expense, I venture to suggest the idea of such a performance as worthy of consideration; and as a means of approach from the street has existed, this relic of antiquity might easily be rendered accessible, and by a little expenditure might be made to appear nearly as perfect as in its original integrity.

The Fishmongers' Almshouses, or St. Peter's hospital, will soon be spoken of in the past tense. It appears, that the value of the ground these buildings occupy has tempted the ancient company to which they appertain, to remove the asylum, for the purpose of laying out the ground more profitably in building sites. The present appearance is that of a characteristic building of the time of James I. The hall appertaining to it is not large, but it contains some good features, and a fireplace

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